

Northbrook, IL - Congressman Mark Kirk (R-IL) presented a ceremonial check for \$850,000 to Northbrook Village President Mark Damisch, representing funds appropriated by Congress to encourage Chicago-area individuals, businesses and local governments to voluntarily reduce air pollution through the Clean Air Counts program.

Kirk sponsored the appropriation in the U. S. House of Representatives and Damisch chairs the Clean Air Counts program of the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus. U.S. Senator Dick Durbin secured the appropriation in the U.S. Senate.

“The Clean Air Counts program is already removing half-a-ton of ozone pollutants from the Chicago region’s air every day,” said Kirk. “More than 180 businesses and other organizations are part of the program. We need more volunteers, including large and small employers, local governments and homeowners.” The EPA designated northern Illinois as a “non-attainment” zone under the Clean Air Act, delivering a mandate to reduce air pollution in Chicagoland.

Kirk said that more than 25 businesses and organizations in his district have signed up, including Baxter Healthcare, Abbott Laboratories, Underwriters Laboratories and Allstate Insurance. Participants reduce pollution by a variety of methods including retrofitting vehicle fleets to reduce emissions and using paints and cleaning products that are low in Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs).

Kirk and Damisch joined local officials who demonstrated several Clean Air Counts products designed to reduce air pollution including; vapor proof/spill proof gas cans, new technology retrofitted on diesel powered equipment and low-VOC paints.

When presented with the ceremonial check, Northbrook Village President Mark Damisch thanked Congressman Kirk and Senator Durbin for steering the Clean Air Counts funding through Congress.

“Congressman Kirk has been a strong voice for the environment, both in Congress and within the party that controls Congress and the White House,” said Damisch. “This is one indication of his commitment to clean air and a healthier environment.”

Damisch listed several initiatives funded through this grant. Initiatives include:

- Grants to local governments throughout the Chicago area used to retrofit municipal vehicles and conduct gas can and lawn equipment exchange programs for residents. About half of the funds are dedicated to these grants.
- Business and community outreach in two target corridors -- the Lake-Cook corridor and Chicago's Clybourn corridor.
- A new target corridor in southern Cook County.
- Public education and outreach.

Damisch said that the grant will allow Clean Air Counts -- which focuses on targeted geographic regions -- to add the third corridor of South Cook County, including communities such as Midlothian, Matteson, Chicago Heights, Richton Park and Tinley Park.

The money comes as summer approaches and Clean Air Counts can make the biggest impact. "Hot summer days are when ozone can kill senior citizens. It is also when this program can do the most to clean the air," said Kirk. "Sharing a ride to work, gassing up the car during cooler evening hours, and reducing the use of lawnmowers all help. The EPA tells me that running a lawn mower for one hour produces as much pollution as driving a car 350 miles."

Clean Air Counts participating businesses located Congressman Kirk's district also include: Discover Financial Services, Eubank and Associates, Rosenthal Manufacturing, Akzo Nobel Aerospace Coatings, Rust-Oleum, W. W. Grainger, Midwest Generation, TMA of Lake Cook, Jones Lang LaSalle, and Serena Sturm Architects.

Others in the district who signed on include the villages of Northbrook, Wilmette, Palatine and Prospect Heights; the city of Highland Park; Arlington Heights Memorial Library; Chicago Botanical Garden, Glencoe; Buffalo Grove Chamber of Commerce; Palwaukee Municipal Airport, Wheeling; and the park districts of Buffalo Grove, Northbrook and Prospect Heights.

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